



To: All Hospital Groups
Date: 08 April 2022
Subject: New Therapeutics Agents for COVID-19

Dear Colleagues,

As you know we now have a number of new therapeutic agents available or becoming available for treatment of COVID-19. I would like to outline the current situation and ask for your support in making the best use of the opportunities provided by these new agents, including Paxlovid, which is now becoming available in Ireland

Clinical Guidance

A multidisciplinary Therapeutics Advisory Group has worked very rapidly to develop clinical guidance on the new agents currently available. Professors Colm Bergin and Catherine Fleming, who are Clinical Leads for the Infectious Disease programme, chair this group jointly. Developing clinical guidance is very challenging because of the pace at which research and emerging real-world evidence is translating into recommendations for practice. Available evidence is limited; studies include mainly non-vaccinated populations and new variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus are emerging. This means that the application of the limited available evidence to our population is not straightforward. In addition, there is a limited global supply of many of these new agents. Notwithstanding these challenges, the TAG has developed updated guidance available [here](#). The guidance refers to the use of currently available therapeutic agents, including but not limited to 'Paxlovid'.

This letter relates primarily to use of the agent Paxlovid. Paxlovid is the first oral antiviral that is recommended in the EU for treating COVID-19. At present, Paxlovid is recommended for certain, high-risk groups with symptomatic, confirmed COVID-19. It must be given within 5 days of symptom onset. Clinicians will be able to prescribe Paxlovid in line with the therapeutic guidance from Monday the 11th of April onward. As this is a new product being delivered into Ireland for the first time, we will be working over the coming days to update and inform prescribers, and outline the guidance and supports that are being put in place to support the introduction of this product

As Paxlovid is an oral medication, it is anticipated that most prescribing will happen outside of hospitals. Prescribing by hospitals may occur where a patient, e.g., with a long-term condition, is prescribed Paxlovid by their hospital team; dispensing of Paxlovid to community patients will occur in the community pharmacy local to the patient. Dispensing of Paxlovid by the hospital pharmacy will only occur for inpatients. Prescribing in either case is complicated by the number of interactions that are recognized for this medication, and a number of supports have been made available for prescribers. These are outlined in the attached supporting documentation and an [updated guidance document](#) is now on hse.ie. We have also updated patient information on hse.ie about therapeutics and about Paxlovid. <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/symptoms/treatments-for-covid-19/>

It is encouraging to that we now have access to medication for those most at risk of severe COVID-19 and I thank you for your continuing support and we work together to roll this out for our patients in Ireland
I hope this provides you with some assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Colm Henry
Chief Clinical Office